

# Wildlife Diversity News

*A Publication of the Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program*

Volume 10, Issue 2

Summer 2011

## Iowa's Breeding Bird Atlas II: Catch It While You Can

Can you believe it's August already? Downy chicks are filling up nests and fledgling birds are food begging just about everywhere you look. For an atlaser, this is as easy as it gets for confirming nesting species. My favorite confirmation so far this year was seeing a blue-winged warbler carrying food to a nest near Rathbun Lake. I also really enjoyed spotting my first fledgling upland sandpipers scurrying around on an otherwise insignificant Greene county gravel road. These are the joys of atlasing. You not only learn new aspects about bird behavior and their favored habitats, but you also come away with a renewed appreciation for Iowa's diverse and productive landscape.

During the fourth season of this five-year project, volunteers continue to atlas the state with passion and vigor. Back in March there were 436 blocks with less than five hours of effort, but now we are down to 148 blocks in that category. We have also bumped up the amount of blocks with over 20 hours of effort from 41 to 63. Keep up the excellent work atlasers! For those of you who haven't given atlasing a try yet, I'd encourage you to give it a whirl. Go visit a block near you and I guarantee you will not only have a great time birding, but you will also be contributing to the conservation and management of Iowa's wonderful birdlife.

Please remember that this opportunity won't last long. A



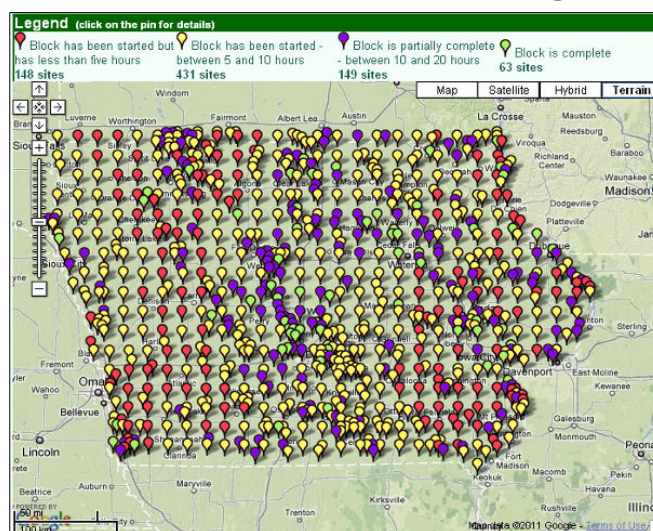
Eastern Kingbird fledglings waiting to be fed by their parents. Photo by Billy Reiter-Marolf.

Breeding Bird Atlas project, like a comet, only comes around once every couple of decades and 2012 is the last year of this project. Very soon many of Iowa's breeding species will have finished nesting for the year. Migrants will begin congregating into groups in anticipation of their fall migration south and resident birds will once again prepare for another cold and snowy Iowa winter. Sorry to mention such "obscenities" during the peak of summer, but I just wanted to

remind you that while it's hot and humid, while the nests are full of life, and while the fledglings are ripe for the counting, catch them while you can!

I can't wait to see what we accomplish this year. Happy Birding!

Billy Reiter-Marolf, BBA Volunteer Coordinator, AmeriCorps  
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*For more information on Iowa's 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas, blockbusting weekends, and to view up-to-date progress check out the website at: <http://bba.iowabirds.org>.*

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*Edited by:  
Kristen Bredemeier*

An updated Breeding Bird Atlas map depicting progress completion by atlas block. Progress is based on how many hours of effort (observation by volunteers) have been recorded in each block.

## News from the Frog Pond

Photo by Josh Otten



It's finally summertime and lots of great species records for Iowa are flowing in from both volunteers and seasonal employees for the Iowa DNR as we continue to find new county records for amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, and dragonflies.

On occasion, we are even still finding species that have never been seen in Iowa. Last year, one of our seasonal employees, Kelsey Drey, photographed a species of dragonfly resembling a Westfall's Snaketail—previously undocumented in Iowa—but was unable to catch it. Documenting dragonfly species requires the actual bug for confirmation. In an attempt to relocate and catch this dragonfly, a Wildlife Diversity Program (WDP) volunteer, Ann Johnson, and I went out to the area of the sighting where Kelsey and the rest of the crew originally saw this particular dragonfly. This attempt was unsuccessful, but Ann and Aaron Brees, another DNR employee and WDP volunteer, went to the same location this year and had much better luck—they captured three! Confirmation of this species is still pending from dragonfly experts, along with the confirmation of two other new species for Iowa believed to have been documented this year. The Multiple Species Inventory & Monitoring crew in Southern Iowa (Casey Bergholdt, Ryan Rasmussen, and Jeremy Brauckman) may have found a Blue Corporal, and the closest known population of this dragonfly species to Iowa occurs in Boone County,

Missouri. If you have an interest in dragonflies, check out Ann's "Dragonflies and Damselflies of Iowa" website: [www.iowaodes.org](http://www.iowaodes.org).

WDP staff members often get a great deal of emails and phone calls about rare species. While we are happy to help you, please realize that we need a photo to confirm or help identify the species. We know that sometimes a photo is just impossible, but it can also be much more possible than retrieving the specimen itself. Some professional organizations are moving away from the idea of needing a dead animal to confirm a rare species report and are now accepting photos for new county records. Keeping your camera handy is becoming more critical than ever as a means of documenting rare species with a good photo.

As I was writing this, a rare species encounter of a different nature occurred right here at Ledges State Park—someone picked up a Three-toed Box Turtle from the road in front of the park office. Three-toed Box Turtles are not native to Iowa, and the closest known population of wild turtles is in Adair County, Missouri—approximately 200 miles from Ledges State Park. It is highly unlikely that a turtle successfully walked this distance and it can probably be assumed that this particular turtle was found in the wild, transported and kept as a pet, and then released at the park.

While one may think having a turtle as a pet would be less work than a cat or a dog,

a turtle will live much, much longer. In fact, like many reptiles, turtles live a very long time—often more than 40 years. The owner's heart may have been in the right place in returning the animal to the wild, but doing so is not only unfair for the individual being released, it can also be detrimental to the wild animals living in the area. Captive animals would have no idea how to forage for their own food and shelter, leaving them vulnerable to predators and other elements—especially if the species does not naturally occur in the area of release. Animals native to areas south of Iowa are unlikely to survive our winters. In addition, many pets have been exposed to illnesses that wild animals have not, making local populations vulnerable to new diseases that could devastate the population.

If you have a friend who finds they can no longer care for a pet—whether cat, dog, turtle, or any other species—please assist that person in taking the pet to a local animal shelter, not releasing it into the wild. If the local shelter does not accept reptiles, they can often tell you who does.

Be sure to stop by the Wildlife booth at the State Fair to see our amphibian and reptile display and the new photographs of dragonflies by Aaron Brees on display!

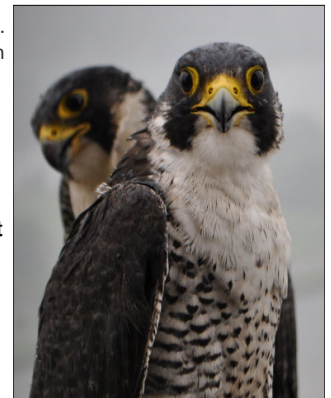
—Karen Kinkad

Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinator

## Peregrine Pairs

Peregrine Falcon pair at the Iowa State Capitol Building.

Photo by Pat Schlarbaum



Peregrine Falcon nesting was gratifying in many regards and troubling in a couple of areas. Nesting falcons had been trending upwards with 15 nesting pairs and ten sites successful with 22 young reproduced in 2010. This year 15 nesting pairs were successful at eight of the sites with 18 young reproduced. Most notably the nesting pairs along the Mississippi River in NE Iowa between Lansing and McGregor were unsuccessful. However, two pairs nesting on major bridges at Dubuque (with at least one young) and Burlington (with two young) were successful. The longest known pairs at Des Moines (two pairs with five young) and Cedar Rapids (four young) were successful. The two energy companies were successful with one young at MidAmerican Energy headquarters in Davenport (one young) and Alliant Energy Plant at Chillicothe (three young). And the falcon pair at ADM in Clinton fledged two males this year. The cadre of falcon-friendly **partners deserve all the credit for this species amazing recovery**. Although 18 young is slightly down this year, that number still represents as many as we ever released in any one year in the 1990s (1999 was single exception when 29 were released at Dubuque and Louisa). This year was a cold and wet spring with many dark clouds, so it is hoped falcon reproduction will rebound in 2012.



## Bald Eagle vs. Wind Turbine

A bald eagle was presumed to be hit by a wind turbine at a Winnebago County wind farm in early March. Conservation Officer Ken Lonneman responded to a report on Thursday, March 17, 2011 of an injured bald eagle on a wind farm near Myre Slough. The bird was first spotted within 50 yards of the base of a wind turbine with nearly a half mile to the nearest roadway, thus implying that a car collision was a less likely cause of injury.

On the day of the report, the bird was very active and agitated—no one could get within 100 feet. By Friday, the eagle's condition had worsened and with the help of the wind farm employees, Officer Lonneman was able to approach and capture the bird to transport it to a veterinarian. The bird was taken to the Iowa State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital's Wildlife Care Clinic, where it was admitted and thoroughly examined. X-rays were taken of the injured wing and the radiographs confirmed that there was a fracture in the radius/ulna of the right wing. The treatment that followed included surgery to



Conservation Officer Ken Lonneman after capturing the injured bald eagle near the base of a wind turbine. Photo provided by Ken Lonneman.

place a metal pin in the wing to realign the broken bones and a round of medications. As soon as the eagle was in stable condition, it was transferred to Kay Neumann of Saving Our Avian Resources (SOAR) for further rehabilitation and, eventually, release.

With a growing market for wind energy and wind turbines speckled across Iowa's landscape, there are many on-

going research projects evaluating mortality of birds and bats resulting from wind turbine collisions. The Wildlife Diversity Program provides information to the DNR Environmental Review Program to assist with Consultations for proposed wind development in efforts to minimize conflicts with wildlife and nearby habitat.

-Kristen Bredemeier  
Wildlife Diversity Outreach  
Program Assistant, AmeriCorps



The injured bald eagle under anesthesia as it is being prepared for surgery at the Iowa State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital. Photo by Sara Ledvina

## Bird Guests and Unwelcome Nests

Spring has passed and summer is well underway—prairie flowers are blooming, home gardens are pumping out fresh veggies, and we're nearing the end of nesting season for birds!

Nests pop up just about everywhere—deep in hollowed tree cavities, amidst wiry thickets of shrubs and hedgerows, weaved gingerly around branches dangling over trails. Find them anywhere from low to the ground in a tuft of prairie grasses to high in the crooks of an oak tree's arms, from slyly wedged into your mailbox to resting gently atop the bright lights of a baseball field. Wait, where?!

It has become pretty obvious that birds just can't seem to translate our demands to "Keep Out" and obey the "No Trespassing" command. Maybe someone will feel it necessary to dust off the

ol' feather quill and write a nasty letter of complaint to all the birds of the world, but until then, their nests will continue to be built wherever they see fit. There is much less available nesting habitat for our birds today due to habitat loss and fragmentation—the removal of large, dead, hollow trees for cavity nesters and shrinking patches of forests with more edges vulnerable to predators are a couple of complicating factors. Birds are constantly competing for the best nesting sites, and some individuals find themselves taking advantage of human development for nest building as a result.

It is important to note that non-game bird species are protected by the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. This not only protects the birds from being harvested or purposefully killed or cap-



An osprey carries a stick to a nest under construction on top of the Okoboji High School baseball field's lights. Photo by Doug Harr.

*Continued on page 6*

## Osprey Report

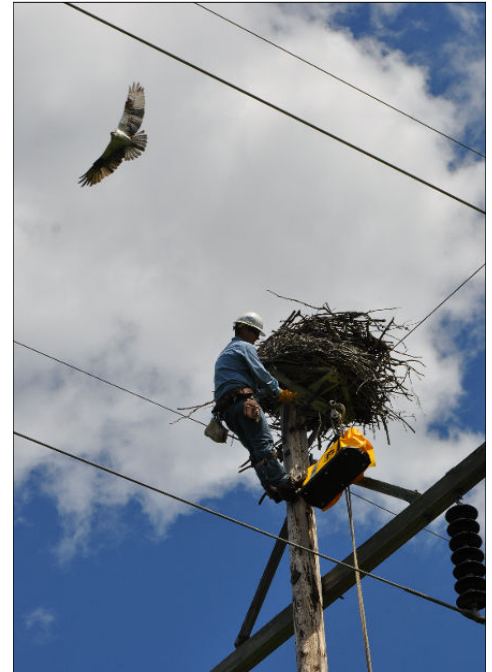
This year 17 Ospreys from Wisconsin and Minnesota were placed at four sites throughout the state of Iowa—White Rock Conservancy in Guthrie Co. by Saving Our Avian Resources staff, Mud Lake on the Mississippi River by Dubuque County Conservation Board (CCB) staff, Spirit Lake by Dickinson CCB staff, and at Annett Nature Center by Warren CCB staff. The Dubuque and Warren CCB staffs are providing webcams that will be up and running soon at [www.dubuquecounty.org/conservation/opsreycam/tabid/203/default.aspx](http://www.dubuquecounty.org/conservation/opsreycam/tabid/203/default.aspx) and [www.warrenccb.org](http://www.warrenccb.org) will have icons directing viewers to this website.

Seventeen Osprey pairs have been reported around Iowa this year. Partners on this project have reported three nesting pairs around Coralville Reservoir, thanks to the staff of Macbride Raptor Project. There are four pairs around Cedar Falls/Waterloo area, thanks to Black Hawk CCB staff at Hartman Reserve Nature Center, and three pairs in Polk Co., thanks to Polk CCB staff. A pair at the Polk City Refuge are distinctive as male has green USFWS band, indicating it was an Iowa-produced fledgling that has matured to adult nesting status. There is also a nesting pair at Don Williams Lake,

thanks to Boone CCB staff, a nesting pair at the Duane Arnold Energy Plant, and a second nesting pair near Palo, thanks to the efforts of Linn CCB staff at Wickiup Hill. Thanks to Osprey partners with Dickinson CCB, there are two nesting pairs at Spirit Lake. Lastly, there are two nesting pairs again this year near Sergeant Bluffs in Woodbury Co. along the Missouri River. Nesting success will provide more surviving young this year than in previous years.

-Pat Schlarbaum  
*Wildlife Diversity Technician II*

Casey Pederson of Minnesota Power retrieves young Osprey from this nest atop a utility pole as an adult flies overhead. The osprey chicks were relocated to Iowa to aid in the restoration of Iowa's Osprey population. Photo by Bill Fraundorf.



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## Is the Fungus Among Us?

Iowa bats have made it through another winter free of White Nose Syndrome (WNS) as the disease continues to spread across North America, killing over 1 million bats since its emergence in 2007. The same cannot be said for bats of Kentucky, Ohio, and North Carolina—three US states that have newly confirmed cases of the deadly disease this spring. This brings the total number of states with the confirmed presence of WNS up to 16, and with spring detections of WNS in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, four Canadian provinces have also confirmed infected bats.

WNS is a disease caused by an infection of the fungus *Geomyces destructans*. The

presence of the fungus itself is not considered indicative of the disease's spread, which is an important distinction because it is still unknown how the disease will manifest itself in different locations and climates. This has been found in Oklahoma and Missouri, but no cases of bats suffering from the disease have been confirmed in these states.

Several cleaning agents have been found to be effective at inactivating the fungus and its spores, including traditional remedies such as Lysol and over-the-counter fungicides. However, these are not practical solutions for such a wide-ranging problem. Treating the fungus with traditional fungicides or dis-

infectants would mean treating the entire cave, polluting aquifers and other microecosystems within the cave. One new and promising solution is spearmint vapor, a natural-based option that would sidestep these environmental concerns. While spearmint vapor has proven successful by inactivating the fungus and its spores in lab tests, field tests are underway to further investigate its usefulness.

Another interesting find comes from Europe. Bats with similar fungal infections have been discovered in twelve European countries, yet no large amount of mortality has occurred in the hiberna-

*Continued on page 6*



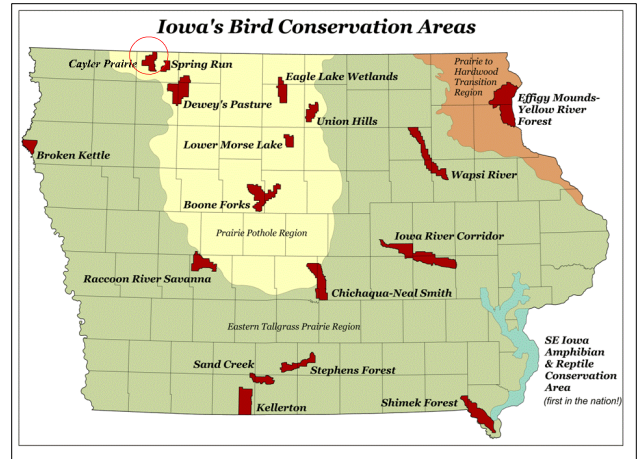
## Cayler Prairie Bird Conservation Area — Now Official

On May 12, 2011, a 37,241-acre area encompassing Cayler Prairie Preserve and several other important wildlife areas in Dickinson County became Iowa's 17<sup>th</sup> official Bird Conservation Area. Cayler Prairie BCA is the first to be centered on a state preserve and is the second, after Dewey's Pasture BCA, to include a National Natural Landmark. This conservation area is also the second to be created in Dickinson County, with the Spring Run Grasslands BCA just a few miles east across Okoboji and Spirit lakes. This is truly a species-rich area, with 123 breeding bird species documented (of the roughly 200 species known to nest in the state) and at least an additional 100 species that use the habitat during migration. The primary focus of the management practices of this area is, as it relates to bird conservation, on grassland and wetland bird species. Grassland composes 37% of the conservation area, and because wooded cover-type is only 2%, fewer forest bird species inhabit the area. Another unique aspect of this BCA is that 22.5% of the area is permanently protected, which provides a large amount of recreational

opportunities for all varieties of wildlife appreciators.

Some believe that grassland birds are the most rapidly declining group of species in this country, adding credence to the establishment of Cayler Prairie BCA. The availability of large blocks of grassland habitat is essential for declining nesting grassland birds. Species such as Bobolink, Dickcissel, Eastern and Western Meadowlarks, Upland Sandpiper and Iowa's Endangered Northern Harrier will benefit from this new conservation area, which will focus on these and other Greatest Conservation Need species. This conservation area, along with the other 16 existing areas, is also now designated as an Audubon Important Bird Area. The National Audubon Society's Important Bird Area program is a global effort to identify and conserve areas that are vital to birds and other biodiversity, and Cayler Prairie BCA certainly fits the mold.

Of course, Cayler Prairie BCA would not be a reality if not for the partnerships developed among conservation agencies, private conservation organizations, and active public citizens. Partners that joined efforts to create this wonderful bird habitat and conservation area include the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, U.S.



A current map of Iowa's 17 Bird Conservation Areas with the newest addition—Cayler Prairie—circled in red.

Fish & Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

Future plans for the Cayler Prairie BCA are still being developed but include ideas such as building bird-viewing platforms, establishing birding trails and creating maps that show where particular bird species might be seen. In the meantime, if a person is interested in observing a large number of bird species in a short amount of time, this is definitely an area he or she will want to visit.

Kristen Bredemeier, an AmeriCorps Wildlife Diversity Program Assistant, has created a brochure for this BCA, which includes a bird checklist and is available from this office. Limited copies are also available at the Dickinson County Conservation Center.

-Bruce Ehresman  
Wildlife Diversity Avian Ecologist



Representatives of partnering organizations that participated in creating the Cayler Prairie Bird Conservation Area. From left to right are: Chris LaRue, Great Lakes Unit DNR Wildlife Biologist; Bruce Ehresman, DNR Wildlife Diversity Avian Ecologist; Lee Schoenewe, Iowa The Nature Conservancy Board of Trustees President; Doug Harr, Iowa Audubon President; Erich Gilbert, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Acting Manager of Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge; and Jeff Kestel, Acting District Conservationist for Natural Resources Conservation Service. Photo by Iowa DNR.

To learn more about Iowa's Bird Conservation Areas, go to:

<http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/>

*Wildlife Stewardship/NonGame Wildlife/Conservation/*

*BirdConservationAreas.aspx*

## Is the Fungus Among Us? (continued)

Continued from page 4



The fungus causing White-nose Syndrome in bats predominantly grows on the cooler areas of the body with concentrations on the ears, wing membranes, and the nose and face.

cula of these bats. This suggests that the bats may have recovered from the disease and developed a resistance. It is unknown whether individual bats can sufficiently groom themselves to fend off the infection, or if theories suggesting a population recovery from a mass mortality long ago or the presence of the fungus in the environment for enough time to develop resistance explain this discrepancy with the current effects of WNS in North America.

In any case, the longer the spread of WNS across North America can be stalled, the more time there is to study its characteristics, work towards answering questions, and uncover ways to fight this destructive fungus. Like many other states, Iowa has closed caves in state parks in an effort to slow the spread of

the disease. Since WNS can spread from bat to bat, it is impossible to stop its transmission completely. However, by keeping caves closed to the public, officials hope to prevent the transmission of the fungus from spelunker's boots, clothing and equipment to uninfected areas. While preventing a favorite means of outdoor recreation can be an inconvenience, the potential devastation of bat species across the state and continent is a greater cost. With a \$3 billion annual contribution to agriculture by natural pest control alone and a priceless role in our ecosystem, bats are not a group we can afford to lose.

-Bridie Nixon  
Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program  
Coordinator, AmeriCorps

## Bird Guests and Unwelcome Nests (continued)

Continued from page 3

tured by any other means, but it also protects any part of the bird (including feathers). Migratory birds are also protected from interference with nesting—any harm, damage, or removal to a nest, eggs, or young, would also be considered a violation of this federal law. House Sparrows and European Starlings, because they are non-native, invasive species, are not protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which means nuisance nests are permissible to be removed. However, it is important to be certain of the species before doing so.

Removing the unwanted nests may be tempting—especially when species like barn swallows have built a nest under the overhang of your porch and left a nice pile of droppings by your front door—but aside from protection by law, some birds start rebuilding nests nearby immediately, so this is not always a long term solution. When leaving the nest is the only option, you might be surprised by how much you could enjoy the beauty of nature by watching the process from start to finish—the nest building, keeping track of the eggs laid, and watching chicks hatch, getting fed, and learning to fly. This can all happen very quickly, as house wrens—a species notorious for building nests in unusual places—have a



Barn swallows often build mud nests (top) on man-made structures, such as the outside of buildings, and can create quite an inconvenient mess on the ground below (bottom). Photo by Iowa DNR

very short fledging period and the young are ready to leave the nest quickly. Providing alternative nesting opportunities, such as putting up several nest boxes, may help encourage birds to use these to build nests in rather than the nooks and crannies of your home.

-Kristen Bredemeier  
Wildlife Diversity Outreach  
Program Assistant, AmeriCorps



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## 2010 Frog and Toad Report

Citizen scientists are keeping a finger on the pulse of Iowa's amphibian population. 2010 was the 20<sup>th</sup> year for Iowa's Frog & Toad Call Survey—a statewide cooperative effort from volunteers and Department of Natural Resources staff to address concerns of amphibian population declines. Pre-determined routes through wetlands with multiple stopping points, or "sites," are assigned to volunteers, and these routes are visited three times throughout the spring and summer to record all frog and toad species calling during the survey.

A total of 78 routes throughout Iowa were surveyed — 49 were traditional routes used repeatedly for each year's surveys, and 29 were new routes assigned by the North American Amphibian Monitoring Program (NAAMP). Traditional sites were initially chosen by volunteers and DNR employees based on historical frog populations and the presence of favorable habitat, which might produce a biased population estimate, but the NAAMP routes are randomly chosen by representatives from this national organization and are therefore unbiased.

On the 49 traditional routes, Eastern Gray Tree Frogs were heard at the most sites last year. They were followed by Chorus Frogs and American Toads, which were ranked first and second among the highest number of sites at which species were detected in 2009.

Spring Peepers and Cricket Frogs were heard in the highest numbers at individual sites in 2010.

On the 29 NAAMP routes, Chorus Frogs were most commonly reported, with American Toads and Eastern Gray Tree Frogs detected among the next highest number of sites. Chorus Frogs and Woodhouse's/ Fowler's Toads were heard in the highest abundance at individual sites. Even though these results are slightly different from the traditional survey, they are not unexpected and are in line with previous years' data.

Out of Iowa's 18 frog and toad species, only four were not heard on either group of survey routes: Pickerel Frogs, Southern Leopard Frogs, Wood Frogs and Crawfish Frogs. The Crawfish Frog has not been observed in Iowa since the 1940s and is most likely extirpated from the state. Neither group of survey routes detected a notable decline in any of the

observed species, and it appears that Iowa's frog and toad populations have remained at their usual numbers.

Trained volunteers have collected data for the 2011 survey. Since the 2010 NAAMP routes fit smoothly into the traditional program, both route types are being surveyed this year. While amphibian populations all over the world face massive declines due to habitat loss, disease and pollution, this volunteer group of Iowans is working to monitor and preserve our wildlife. Here's looking forward to the next 20 years of Iowa's Frog & Toad Call Survey!

-Bridie Nixon

*Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program  
Coordinator, AmeriCorps*

*Want to get involved with next year's Frog &  
Toad Call Surveys?*

*Visit: [http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/  
WildlifeStewardship/NonGameWildlife/  
VolunteerWildlifeSurveys.aspx](http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/WildlifeStewardship/NonGameWildlife/VolunteerWildlifeSurveys.aspx)*



## An End to the Non-Game Certificate Era

**The 2011 non-game support certificate is now available!**

The purchase of this numbered collectible print supports the state Wildlife Diversity Program and wildlife conservation in Iowa. This year's certificate features a beautiful male cardinal image taken by Stan Buman. This will be the final year the certificate will be offered - marking 32 years of annual non-game support certificates. To better see the certificate and get more information you can visit

**[www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/WildlifeStewardship/  
NonGameWildlife/InsideWildlifeDiversity/  
HowIsDiversityFunded/NonGameSupportCert.aspx](http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/WildlifeStewardship/NonGameWildlife/InsideWildlifeDiversity/HowIsDiversityFunded/NonGameSupportCert.aspx)**

They are also available for purchase at The Nature Store - [www.iowa-nature-store.com](http://www.iowa-nature-store.com).



## Species Spotlight: The Quest for the Purplish Copper

So you thought quests were a thing of the past? A hobby for knights in armor involving a dragon or two and perhaps some sparkly gemstones? Well, you are mistaken! Wildlifers embark on quests all the time, and although they don't usually include armor or gemstones, they do sometimes involve something sparkly--like the jeweled wing of a butterfly.

Wildlife can be an elusive lot, and when the species in question is exceedingly rare and only about 3 cm in size, the search for this critter certainly qualifies as a quest. The Purplish Copper (*Lycaena helloides*) is a small butterfly usually found haunting marshes and wet meadows. The problem is that it hasn't been found anywhere in Iowa since 1990, which makes it one of the rarest butterfly species in the state. Even before 1990 the Purplish Copper was fairly rare and it has only been recorded at roughly a dozen sites since the turn of the century. Iowa's Wildlife Action Plan (IWAP) lists the species as both a State Species of Concern and a Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

The rarity of the Purplish Copper is a bit of a conundrum. The species is mostly native to the Western U.S., where it is still relatively common, but east of the Missouri River it has become increasingly uncommon. The first factor consid-



The Purplish Copper is one of Iowa's butterflies that is considered a Species of Concern and a Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Photo by Brad Smith.

ered in exploring the sparse distribution or rarity of a butterfly species is the distribution and abundance of its host plant. The Purplish Copper's host plants, Dock and Knotweed, are both common and widespread weeds, so this does not explain its rarity. Another factor to consider is interspecific competition. The much-more-common Bronze Copper (*Lycaena hyllus*) shares the same host plants and habitats as the Purplish Copper. With both species competing for the same resources, the higher abundance of Bronze Coppers could indicate that they are monopolizing these resources.

Answering this question of why the Purplish Copper is so rare is quest all its own, but this year--and likely the next

few to follow--will be dedicated to tackling the more specific question of whether this species still exists in Iowa. During the months of June and July, members of the Iowa DNR, in partnership with Reiman Gardens and the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan Butterfly Working Group, will be fanning out across the state to look for Purplish Coppers. These individuals will be searching the known locations where the butterflies have historically occurred, as well as scouring nearby sites with habitat that has the potential to support this species. Will the Purplish Copper be found? The outcome is uncertain, but the quest will surely be worthwhile.

—Stephanie Shepherd  
Surveys & Data Coordinator

## Recognition for Bluebird Conservation



Iowa Bluebird Conservationists recognized Rita Efta with a lifetime achievement award at this year's Bluebird Conference. Participants enjoyed programs from Dean Biechler, Don Poggensee, and Carl Kurtz. Next year's conference is scheduled for **10AM April 21, 2012 at Story County Conservation Center at McFarland Park**. This is an excellent opportunity for individuals interested in birding and specific Bluebird interests throughout Iowa. Contact Pat Schlarbaum, [Pat.Schlarbaum@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Pat.Schlarbaum@dnr.iowa.gov), for information on reporting bluebirds.

Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity staff member Pat Schlarbaum (right) presenting a lifetime achievement award to Rita Efta (left) and at the 2011 Bluebird Conference in Story County, IA.



Male Eastern Bluebird.  
Photo by Don Poggensee



## Last Look

Pull out your guide to "The Snakes of Iowa" and give the identification of this snake a go. If you think you know the pattern, but the color has you scratching your head, you're not alone. Pictured here is a Northern Water Snake with an unusual color morph. This species typically models a mostly gray body with dark gray to reddish brown bands and reddish crescents on the underside, but occasionally some will vary in color to an extreme such as this vibrantly orange individual. Photo by Billy Reiter-Marolf.



## Events Calendar

### Iowa State Fair

August 11-21:

Iowa State Fairgrounds, 30th Street  
and East University Avenue  
Des Moines, IA

### Pelican Festival

September 25:

Saylorville Lake  
Polk County

### HawkWatch

October 1-2:

Effigy Mounds National Monument ,  
151 HWY 76  
Harpers Ferry, IA 52146

### Monarch Tagging

August 27, 1:00 p.m.:

Brushy Creek  
Webster County

*A Publication of the:*



Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources  
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Boone, IA 50036

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## Wild Words of Wisdom

*"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the stability, integrity, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong if it tends otherwise."*  
— Aldo Leopold